

Enclosure of letter from Eliza Symonds Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, October 19, 1873

A Singular Story .

A somewhat singular circumstance is related of the lad Kingston, who lost an arm recently by a threshing machine in Adelaide. It appears that subsequently to the amputation, and the limb having been buried, he complained that his hand was cramped, causing him extreme pain, and desired the arm to be disinterred. No attention, however, was paid to the request for some time, but the boy still persisted, asserting that if the arm was not raised he would not recover. The limb was accordingly disinterred, and the hand found to be firmly shut together. During the operation of opening the hand the patient evinced great agony, and afterwards declared that he felt relieved of the sensation of cramp from which he appeared to suffer so acutely. The circumstance, if true, says the *Strathroy Dispatch*, is certainly a curious one; not more so, however, than many others in the records of medical experience.

How Pianos are Injured.

According to a prominent manufacturer, there are more pianos injured by improper tuning than by any legitimate use and the consequent natural wear of the instruments. The frame of a good piano, fully strung and tuned, is made to resist a tension equal to about seven tons. This severe strain relaxes as the string recedes from pitch, but is renewed when the piano is tuned; and it is frequently discovered, as a result of this repeated process, that the frame is bent or bellied; and at the hands of an ignorant tuner or one lacking good judgment, an instrument at this stage is soon injured beyond remedy. With reasonable use, a piano is expected to remain in good condition for seven years, and the best makers will so guarantee their instruments; but the incompetence and malpractice of certain so-

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called tuners sets the seal of destruction on thousands of instruments in from two to five years.

In tuning a piano, the correct method is to begin in the center of the instrument, on what is called middle C. Yet many tuners, when leaving middle C, instead of going down the scale and tuning the lower notes and heavier and longer strings first—thus immediately bringing the greatest tension to bear upon the frame, and forming, as it were, a solid foundation upon which to operate,—will go up the scale, beginning with the shorter and lighter wires and higher notes, leaving the bass strings until the last, with the invariable result that, when the tuning of the lower portion of the piano is completed, the upper octaves are found to be decidedly away from pitch. Every time a piano is tuned in this manner, it increases the liability of bending the frame and renders the instrument more difficult to tune and keep in tune. The apparent physical effect may be so infinitesimal as to be tissue paper will produce a difference of nearly a half tone in the sound of a given note. If the lighter strings are tuned first, they relax when the greater strain is brought to bear in keeping the heavier wires up to pitch, with the effect referred to above.

Many tuners do not carefully note the condition of the frame of a piano, and adapt their treatment to the circumstances of the case, with full knowledge that a bent, weakened, or very old frame will not stand the extreme tension or sustain the strings at the high pitch which can be put upon and borne by a frame and wires which have never been injured through ignorance or neglect, and bear no special mark of time or use. There are very few pianos, and those of the best description, that will stand at concert pitch. The piano manufacturers, advise purchasers to have their instruments tuned by representatives of the respective factories from which the pianos are sent, as they are aware of the terrible ordeal through which the instrument must pass at the hands of tuners of every degree of intelligence and ability. It is but a fair presumption that the maker of an instrument ought to know how to tune it properly and without injury to its most important parts; yet there are, comparatively, very few persons who profit by the well meant advice, an impression prevailing in some minds that the suggestion is not entirely disinterested, as the maker charges \$2 for tuning,

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while professional tuners and the music stores ask but \$1.50, and some of the Bohemians but \$1. But were the matter fully and generally understood by the owners of pianos, they would consider it greatly to their interest, even in the light of an investment, to have their instruments tuned by parties in whose hands there is the least possibility of accident or injury.